

• Appln No. 09/856,969

Filed: August 1, 2001

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Amendments To The Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for regulating the inflammatory response of enterocytes, said method comprising contacting said enterocytes with a composition containing as an active agent a lactic acid bacteria strain capable of decreasing the production of nitric oxide (NO) by cultures of enterocytes preactivated with a mixture of pro-inflammatory cytokines comprising $IL-1-\beta$, $TNF-\alpha$, and $IFN-\gamma$ and bacterial lipopolysaccharides (LPS).
2. (Previously Amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said strain is also capable of increasing the production of NO by cultures of enterocytes preactivated with pro-inflammatory cytokines.
3. (Previously Amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said bacterial strain is a *Lactobacillus casei* (*L. casei*) strain.
4. (Previously Amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said bacterial strain is the *L. casei* strain CNCM I-1518.
5. (Previously Amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said composition is in the form of a food supplement.
6. (Previously Amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said composition is in the form of a fermented dairy product.
7. (Withdrawn) Process for screening novel lactic acid bacterial strains which have properties which modulate non-specific immunity, which comprises selecting lactic acid bacteria strains capable of inhibiting the production of NO by cultures of enterocytes preactivated with pro-inflammatory cytokines and bacteria LPS.

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8. (Withdrawn) Process according to Claim 7, which also comprises a step of selecting strains capable of increasing the production of NO by cultures of enterocytes preactivated with pro-inflammatory cytokines.

9. (Withdrawn) Process according to Claim 7, wherein said strains are screened using cultures of lactic acid bacteria chosen from the group consisting of lactobacilli, lactococci, streptococci and bifidobacteria.

10. (Previously Amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the lactic acid bacteria is in the form of whole bacteria which may or may not be living.

11. (Previously Amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the lactic acid bacteria is in the form of a bacterial lysate.

12. (Previously Amended) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the lactic acid bacteria is in the form of bacterial fractions.

13.- 20 (Cancelled)